

ABOUT BOOKS

Dead Man's Fancy

By Keith McCafferty

Published 2014 by Viking, New York, NY
\$26.95 hardcover

Wolves, murder and the disappearance of a gorgeous red-haired guide, Nanika Martinelli, nicknamed the “Fly-fishing Venus,” fuel Keith McCafferty’s third Sean Stranahan novel.

The fishing guide, artist and occasional detective is interrupted from his pursuit of steelhead on the Salmon River by a phone call from Hyalite County Sheriff Martha Ettinger. She’s discovered a dead wrangler on Papoose Mountain, impaled on the antler tine of a trophy elk while trying to track down the missing Venus.

Ettinger has her hands full back in the Madison Valley after wolves are implicated in the young woman’s disappearance, and orders Stranahan to Libby, where he unearths a tragic history. Nanika’s mother drowned years ago when the family’s snowmobile fell through the ice on a Canadian lake, and her father, a government trapper who suffered from asbestos poisoning, had recently “French-kissed his revolver.”

In addition to her fly-fishing guiles, Nanika was involved in a radical animal rights group, the Clan of the Three-Clawed Wolf, and was the favored mistress of its charismatic, red-eyed leader.

Wolf lovers and wolf haters collide, as McCafferty plumbs some of Montana’s hot-button issues in this gripping read. And, like any good painting that emerges from a sketch, the characters in McCafferty’s novels are fleshed out as the series goes on. Sparks continue to flare between unflappable, attractive Sheriff Ettinger and Stranahan; and a soft heart beats within the hairy chest of the burly, hapless angler Sam Meslik (who has Mickey Mouse wielding a fly-rod tattooed on his massive bicep).

“McCafferty knows his country and his characters, who have a comfortable, lived-in feel and yet shine as individuals,” writes *Kirkus Reviews*. “... McCafferty’s understated prose deserves to be savored.”

In addition to two previous novels, the Bozeman author is survival and outdoor skills editor of *Field & Stream*, and has written for *Fly Fisherman*, *Mother Earth News* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

— Kristi Niemeyer



The Cow's Boy:

The Making of a Real Cowboy

By Charlotte Caldwell
Published 2013 by Barn Board Press, Clyde Park, MT
\$16.95 hardcover

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to grow up on a real ranch with cows and chickens and horses? *The Cow's Boy* invites young readers to pull on their boots and work gloves and join Luna, a Black Angus calf, for her story about the boy who feeds and takes care of her.

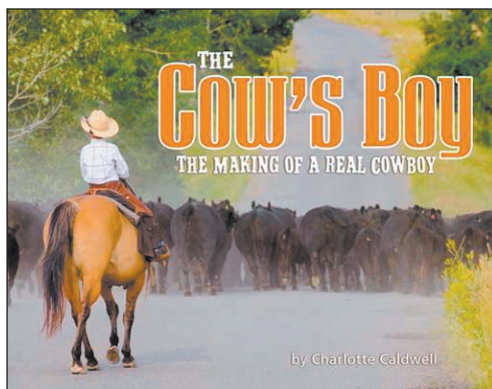
The Cow's Boy has lots of chores, but he also has plenty of fun, even riding with wranglers to drive cows to their summer pasture in the mountains. His adventures are captured in 67 action-filled, full-color photographs.

Writer and photographer Charlotte Caldwell had a different book in mind when she first visited Luna's ranch. But after a day shadowing Zane, a 9-year-old boy, on his rounds of the ranch, she knew he would be the book's main character.

“Zane was dressed in jeans, a silver belt buckle, and cowboy boots, and he wore big dimples with every smile as he showed me around the ranch,” Caldwell recalls.

She hopes her first children's book realistically portrays the culture of a small family ranch while offering a “joyful celebration of ranching life, and a way to honor the next generation of cowboys.”

She plans to release *The Cow's Girl* in 2014. The photographer, naturalist and preservationist also published *The Cottages and Architects of Yeamans Hall* and *Visions and Voices: Montana's One-Room Schoolhouses*.



Who Lost? The Autobiography of a Blind Man with Great Vision

By Dale Sheldon

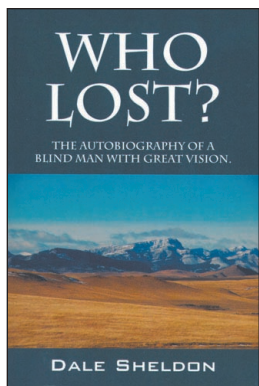
Published 2013 by Outskirts Press, Denver, CO
\$14.95 softcover

Conrad native Dale Sheldon tells a remarkable story of gumption and perseverance in his autobiography, *Who Lost?* A table leg, doubling as a baseball bat, claimed one eye at age 4. Vision in his other eye eventually disappeared too in what doctors called a “sympathetic infection.”

But a devoted family, a defiant spark and an inquisitive nature have helped him live a more adventuresome life than most sighted people. His little brother, Earl, “became eyes for me”; Mr. Callahan at the School for the Deaf and Blind in Great Falls “made me believe I could do anything anybody else was doing”; and supportive parents and extended family “permitted me to function pretty much like other kids.”

He rode horses and bikes, helped out on the family farm on the edge of the Sun River, ice skated, fished, swam, and learned how to shoot a gun.

His wife, Aggie, was a woman who “simply assumed and believed there was no reason why I couldn't or shouldn't do things.” Sheldon attended the automotive program at Rocky Mountain College, and eventually specialized in fixing transmissions, with help from Aggie, who read aloud parts books and manuals.



The young Montanan was among 15 blind people invited to serve as Russian translators in a secretive Cold War program. The Kennedy Administration hoped their lack of sight would help them “focus on the material needed and not what they were seeing.”

He spent several years in Washington, D.C., mastering not only Russian, but navigating the intricacies of city life. He eventually helped write a 50,000-word Braille Russian-English dictionary before the Special Language Project was disbanded.

The family returned to Conrad, and he resumed life as a mechanic, but continued to hunt, camp, fish, and ride motorcycles and snowmobiles and even water ski. He also became a sculptor, creating bronzes and wooden urns from oak, walnut and cherry.

His youngest daughter and a grandson have learning disabilities, and in his quest to help them, he has served on the Developmentally Disabled Council. He was also elected to the Pondera County Commission for 12 years.

Although his beloved Aggie died in 2004, he continues to navigate his life with characteristic hope and optimism. His take-away? “Being blind has some redeeming factors. All the females in my life can be beautiful and all the mountains can be climbed. My goal is to keep climbing.”

— Kristi Niemeyer

These Can't Be Choices

By Cori Di Biase

Published September 2013 by The Apparent Sublime, Cascade, MT
\$16.99 softcover; \$7.99 Kindle

In a starred review, *Kirkus* praises Cori Di Biase's first novel as a “beautifully written debut.”

The Montana author takes readers into the dark, turbulent brain of Ben, and his younger self, called simply the boy. Ben, a mechanic in Washington, DC, seeks solitude and the comfort of routine. He's mocked by his coworkers, who call him Compone, just as the boy was mocked by his fellow students for not fitting in.

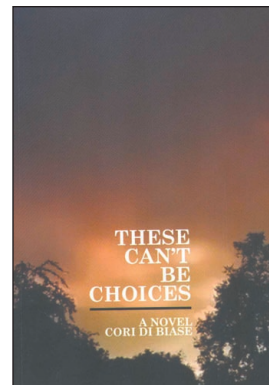
“The boy saw their hatred. Their disgust. It was pure, and it was clear, and it was honest. But there was something else. Something on their faces, or behind their eyes, or in the receding sinews and tethers of the one monster that had broken apart and now faded away. There was something else that drove them away. The boy couldn't understand that it was fear.”

In parallel narratives, Di Biase's spare, suspenseful prose reveals the terrifying trajectory of the troubled boy, whose life seems “endless and dangerous,” to the distant, uncommunicative man, whose shell is shattered by a chance relationship. “The more he thought about that night the harder it was to remember. The memory crumbled in his hands like old paper. It fell to pieces. Fragments that had no order and made no sense at all.”

“The writing mirrors Ben's agitated state, infecting readers with his anxiety,” writes *Kirkus*. “Put squarely inside a troubled mind, readers can't escape the fearsome knowledge that something bad is coming. Brilliant, frightening and skillfully written.”

IndieReader calls Di Biase's prose “sometimes lush and sometimes brutal, ... at times uncomfortably nihilistic, but it's also very well-written, and the quality of the prose makes it a good read, if not always an easy one.”

Di Biase is a graduate of Bard College at Simon's Rock and Purchase College. Born in New Jersey and raised in New York, he now lives in Montana with his wife and stepdaughter.



Landscape and Legacy: The Splendor of Nature, History, and Montana's Rocky Mountain Front

Written & Compiled by Dr. John A. Vollertsen

Published 2013 by Farcountry Press, Helena, MT
\$19.95 softcover

John Vollertsen, who completed his master's and doctoral research on Montana's Rocky Mountain Front, shares his considerable knowledge of that compelling landscape, along with observations by several other scientists, conservationists and researchers in *Landscape and Legacy*.

The book's 17 essays eloquently explore the area's complex geologic, biologic and social histories. The motivation to assemble this collection was simple: “Somewhere between loving it to death and exploiting it to unsustainable proportions, the Front requires advocacy to maintain its monolithic appeal,” he writes.

In his own essays, Vollertsen travels the Old North Trail, details the Assiniboine's centuries-old connection to the area, and recounts adventures from the two decades he spent observing grizzlies.

Other contributors include geologist Karen Porter, conservationists Bill Cunningham, Keith Aune, Jim Posewitz, Bob Kiesling and Gloria Flora, Métis descendant Larry Salois, and wildlife biologists Harold Picton, Mike Thompson and Jim Williams.

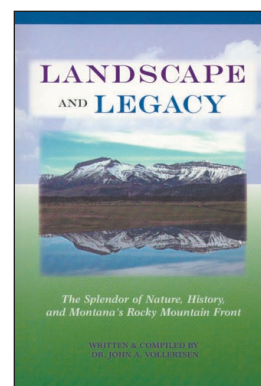
In an essay titled “Taking Refuge on the East Front,” Mary Strachan Sriver notes that the homeland of the Blackfeet and Métis has also provided sanctuary and inspiration to myriad writers, including A.B. Guthrie Jr., Ripley Schemm Hugo and her mother, Mildred Walker, and Joseph Kinsey Howard. “All have close and emotional connections to the land.”

Attorney and outdoorsman Stoney Burk closes the book with an appeal for support of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act, a grassroots plan that would preserve this national treasure.

“It's the experiences and memories, the sum of our relationship with the lands we love, that makes us better human beings,” writes Flora, a former forest supervisor for the Lewis and Clark National Forest. “Our legacy of wild landscapes is worth far more than money can buy.”

Vollertsen, who lives in Helena, is a recipient of the Montana Wilderness Association's Sedlack Award for his work on the Front.

— Kristi Niemeyer



11

Award-winning Montana writers speak at conference

Montana authors Keith McCafferty and Danielle Girard will be the featured speakers at the fifth annual Get Published Conference for Writers, May 17 in Bozeman.

McCafferty is the award-winning author of *The Royal Wulff Murders*, *The Gray Ghost Murders*, and *Dead Man's Fancy*, which received a *Publisher's Weekly* Starred Review. The Survival and Outdoor Skills Editor of *Field & Stream* has written articles for publications such as *Fly Fisherman Magazine*, *Mother Earth News*, *Gray's Sporting Journal* and the *Chicago Tribune*. He has won numerous awards, including the Robert Traver Award for angling literature.

Girard is the award-winning author of the Rookie Club series. Her books have won the Barry Award and the RT Reviewers Choice Award and two of her novels have been optioned for movies.

The conference is at the Best Western GranTree Inn in Bozeman. For more information visit GetPublishedConference.com.